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Violence and Communication

Center for Basque Studies (University of Nevada, Reno) / Universidad del País Vasco, Reno, 2012, 209 pp.

The depiction of violence is a trend in communicative and creative practices, especially in our visual culture. While its presence and appeal are not recent, there may be gained visibility within the dominant digital environment and new implications must be considered. Hence the binomial communication-violence constitutes itself a target of constant academic reflection.

This collective work is an interesting approach of international extent, a result of the collaboration between the Center for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada and the University of the Basque Country. From a multidisciplinary approach, researchers take different perspectives to help gain a better understanding of such a complex phenomenon as violence and, therefore, its media coverage. That range of purposes and methodologies, however connected in a common thematic framework, is precisely one of the main assets of the proposal. The strength of the collected contributions is the other one, thus the rigorous theoretical and analytical frameworks allow the academic debate and they point to new ways of exploration.

Terrorist violence in the Basque Country has a prominent place throughout the nine chapters presented, alongside other recent historical phenomena whose representation in the media have influenced the social and cultural imaginary. A paradigmatic example is perhaps the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, as Imanol Zumalde regards it as the violent spectacle par excellence in the XXI century. He also proposes a taxonomy of patterns and mechanisms for the audiovisual expression of violence, encompassing the document as a mimetic record of the reality to the stylization of violent actions in audiovisual fictions. His dissection eases the semiotic study of this phenomenon predominant in iconosphere.

The violent sign of the last century has also been increased with genocides, such as Imanol Zubero remembers when treating the phenomena of social violence within a community. This author has researched the mechanisms of their genesis, i.e. the notion of a "strange" as a rejected member of the group. Zubero also deepens on the political building of this figure in segregationist dynamics, offering an interesting reference to research on the role played by the media.

In the third chapter, Carmen E. Arocena and Nekane Zubiaur discuss the symbolic imaginary constructed by the media, exerting violence against women in relation to dominant beauty patterns and the depiction of sexuality from the male perspective. The authors bring uncritical feminist positions away, noting some artists who have transgressed social norms agreed on what should be visible or not.

From the principles of peace journalism, Alfonso Dubois enlightens the link between poverty, inequality and violent conflict. He reviews the analyses on political economy and the theoretical discussions causing the inclusion of poverty in the security agenda of wealthier countries. This provides the journalists a valuable key to cope with the complexity of conflicts, promoting a better coverage and understanding of them.

On the other hand, the research on the use of digital technologies by young people has received a boost in recent years. Maialen Garmendia, Carmelo Garaitaonandia, Gemma Martínez and Miguel Angel Casado rely on the UK Kid Online Project as part of a study promoting the need to delve into the chances of the Internet, and not just into the risks, as it has been the prioritizing approach thus far. Regulatory policies should avoid public alarm and encourage "social mediation" of parents in order to promote a better use of technologies.

The last chapters of the book focus on the terrorist violence in the Basque Country, from complementary perspectives. Juan Uriarte God addresses the recovery of victims, which estimates understudied yet. The community dimension becomes so important as the social discourse dignifying the victim is one of the favourable factors of influence. Therefore, mass media cannot ignore the need for honest information delegitimizing violence.

Ramon Esparza and Nekane Parejo address the media discourse in its historical dimension and socio-political implication. These authors value the evolution of depicting models prioritized by the press facing the graphic coverage of the attacks, encompassing the dictatorial censorship in the sixties, to the awareness of the media regarding the dignity of victims during the nineties. These considerations are essential to understand the political of visions in the general context and the gradual maturity of the media according to freedom of information.

José Ignacio Armentia and José María Caminos analyse the evolution of the Basque press treatment given to terrorist activities in the last two decades. The authors show the political and media consensus considering that press coverage should be an effective tool to combat terrorism. This point of view boosted a common information policy in the Basque media landscape.

Finally, Carmelo Moreno approaches the political humour of the program *Vaya Semanita* from the perspective of audience perception and interpretation in the Basque socio-political framework. Overall, young people perceive this program as a comic but not injurious phenomenon that has broken taboos by taking the popular Basque political imaginary and its associated stereotypes.

The set of inputs provided by the different authors seem valuable for researchers interested in the media treatment of violence from complementary perspectives. But also media professionals will find in the socio-political, psychological and cultural clues here offered issues for reflection and guidance in the production of media discourse.

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